

THE CONTEXTS OF NATIONAL AND GENDER BELONGING:
THE HISTORY OF FEMALE SUFFRAGE IN SLOVAKIA

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Slovaks in the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Women living in today Slovakia¹ gained suffrage in 1920, with the Constitutional Bill (Act 121/1920) of the newly established state of Czechoslovakia.² Neither the women's movement nor the suffrage movement can take exclusive or even primary credit for women's suffrage there, however, as wider societal and political processes of democratic nation- and state-building were decisive. This chapter explores these processes.

An independent state only since 1993, Slovakia became part of Czechoslovakia after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. Efforts to 'awaken' Slovak national consciousness, though, were made as far back as the end of the 18th century. During the 1840s, a 'national revival' raised political claims based on a Herderian notion of 'nation', which rested on the identification with Slovaks' language and culture. But demands to attain varying levels of autonomy during the 1848 revolution and in 1861 failed. After the establishment of the Dual Monarchy (Austria-Hungary) in 1867, Magyarization—the Hungarian government's efforts to unify the country and to prevent the diversity of nationalities in their political, social, and cultural articulation—impacted Slovak cultural and political life detrimentally, despite successful resistance to it.

Between 1869 and 1918, up to seven elected Slovak members of parliament (MPs) represented Slovaks in the lower chamber of the Hungarian assembly; the first Slovak political parties were also founded in this period. Beginning in 1901, after years of Slovaks' 'passivity', or retreat from official Hungarian politics in protest of electoral manipulations, the Slovak National Party,³ representing Slovak interests in the Hungarian

¹ This chapter will focus on ethnic Slovak women.

² Malý K., *Dějiny českého a česko-slovenského práva do roku 1945* (Praha: 1997) 282–283.

³ Founded in 1871, it was the only Slovak political party until the end of the 19th century, retaining its dominance even longer. The party program was originally based on traditionalism and referred back to the Memorandum of the Slovak Nation (1861) which demanded limited autonomy for Upper Hungary, the territory of today's Slovakia (Mannová E. and

parliament, won some seats in the Hungarian Diet. Yet Slovaks' diverse cultural, social, and political life made it difficult to unite 'Slovak politics' under one party. 'Slovak politics' referred to multiple political movements agreeing on two 'fundamental requests, one *national*, which concerned language, and one *democratic*, which concerned universal and secret suffrage primarily'.⁴ As the Slovak National Party was unable to evolve from an elitist to a mass party, the Slovak People's Party, the Social Democrats, the Liberals, and the agrarian movement became more influential.⁵ The Slovaks' cultural leanings towards Czechs gradually evolved into economic and political cooperation. Triggered by the new geopolitical landscape, Czechoslovakia came into existence on October 28, 1918.

The Cause of Female Suffrage and Slovak Nationalism, an Uneasy Alliance

Female suffrage was not the object of a specific political or social movement in Slovakia, but surfaced in various contexts at the beginning of the 20th century. Discourses on the issue were stimulated by developments on the international suffrage scene and in neighboring countries, but have to be viewed from within the process towards 'universal' male suffrage for Slovaks in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Under the electoral law of 1848, in force in Hungary until 1914, suffrage was conditioned by sex, status, property, tax, and education. Moreover, a good command of Hungarian language was required for active participation in Hungarian assembly meetings.⁶ Elections were lively events⁷ and,

Holec R., "On the Road to Modernization 1848–1918", in Mannová E. (ed.), *A Concise History of Slovakia* (Bratislava: 2000) 209–212).

⁴ Lipták L., *Slovensko v 20. storočí* (Bratislava: 2000) 18–24.

⁵ The Slovak People's Party broke away from the Hungarian Catholic People's Party in 1905 and capitalized on Slovakia's predominantly Catholic population. The Slovak Social Democrats branched out of the Social Democrats in Budapest in 1905. The Liberals formed from groups of Slovak students in Prague, and gathered around periodicals. Those grouped around *Hlas* (Voice) first aimed at Masarykian 'small scale work' among rural inhabitants. Pre-war liberals grouped around *Prúdy* (Currents) and strongly supported Czecho-Slovak cooperation. An agrarian movement evolved from the liberals and transformed into a party in the Czechoslovak Republic in 1920 (Podrimavský M., "Kríza liberálneho režimu 1901–1904", in Kováč D. (ed.), *Na začiatku storočia 1901–1914* (Bratislava: 2004) 130–131; Podrimavský M., "Vyvrcholenie politickej krízy: Koaličná vláda 1905–1910", in Kováč *Na začiatku storočia 1901–1914* 160–165.

⁶ Potemra M., "Uhorské volebné právo a vol'by na Slovensku v rokoch 1901–1914", *Historický časopis* 23, 2 (1975) 202–203.

⁷ In 1901, approximately 7% of the Hungarian population (960,000 men) were listed as voters, 9.1% of whom were Slovak. Many aspects of the electoral law were subject to

as in the Slovak national revival of the 1840s and 1850s, women participated as auxiliaries and supporters of candidates.

The Slovak National Party and the Slovak People's Party represented the Slovak lands in the Hungarian Diet. Proposals for new electoral laws were submitted in 1905 and 1907 by Hungarian politicians—and were harshly criticized by Slovak politicians for their national and class chauvinism. Universal suffrage was discussed as male suffrage predominantly, and no critics expressed discontent with women's exclusion.⁸ Nor did the Hungarian League for Universal Secret Suffrage or the Hungarian social democrats consider demanding female suffrage.⁹

The women's movement in Slovakia formed alongside the nationalist movement after the 1848 revolution. Slovak nationalism advocated the existence of a distinct Slovak nation. A 'proper Slovak' education from early childhood was regarded as a defence against Magyarization, with its banning of the Slovak language in public life. Slovak language and identity were to be cultivated in families—the 'Slovak family' was to resist a hostile political environment. Mothers were to help the nation's reproduction as preservers and transmitters of cultural Slovak values.¹⁰

The implications of nationalist ideology were ambiguous. While an image of 'patriotic motherhood'¹¹ arose, women could not be left out of public activities because their proportion of the population was high in a small 'nation-in-the-making'. Boys from rural and intellectual Slovak families could study at three *gymnázia* (high schools for boys 14–18 years of age) in Slovak at least for a limited period (from 1862 until 1875, when the last *gymnázium* closed), but those lucky girls who could study usually embarked on their education in German or Hungarian. Slovak education (in special schools for girls, in women's magazines) was therefore one of the women's movement's main goals in the second half of the 19th century.

From 1862 to 1864, a group of educated young girls from nationalist families in the town of Martin, the center of Slovak nationalism, ran their own salon, *Beseda dievčenská* (Young Women's Club), aiming at

interpretation by local authorities, and the tax level required to vote differed significantly among settlements (Potemra, "Uhorské volebné právo" 202–03.

⁸ Potemra M., "Boj za všeobecné volebné právo v Uhorsku v politike slovenskej buržoázie v rokoch 1905–1910", *Historické štúdie* 20 (1976) 161–200.

⁹ Zimmermann S., *Die Bessere Hälfte? Frauenbewegungen Und Frauenbestrebungen im Ungarn der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918* (Wien and Budapest: 1999) 328.

¹⁰ Weber N., "Gender and Class as Components of National Efforts in Slovakia from 1848 until 1900", *Historické štúdie* 36 (1995).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

self-education—although it was often ridiculed by nationalists. The first Slovak women's association, *Živena* (Donatrix of Life), created in 1869 and originally led by men, focused on girls' education. After Slovak institutions and associations were banned and closed in the 1870s, however, *Živena* assumed general nationalist aims and its focus on women faded away.¹² The emancipation discourse can be traced to the women's magazine, *Dennica* (The Daily Star), established in 1898 and run by Elena Maróthy-Šoltéssová and Terézia Vansová.¹³ Besides advocating women's education, the magazine developed a wider discourse on women's social position.¹⁴

While a sustained discourse on women's role existed in the nationalist movement from the 1860s on, women's suffrage became a subject of heated debate in Slovak newspapers and public discourse only in 1912. In that year, Hana Gregorová,¹⁵ a young writer, published a short story collection entitled 'Women' (*Ženy*), a sharply critical publication that polarized Slovak public opinion and that some considered the source of feminism as a 'social...issue.'¹⁶ At that time, a public debate emerged in newspapers prompted by developments on the international suffrage scene. First, in 1912, Božena Kunětická-Viková became the first woman elected to the Czech Diet, and though she was not given her credentials and could not take up the position, she and her supporters gained wide recognition in the Czech lands and neighboring countries.¹⁷ Second, in 1913, the liberal Hungarian Feminist Association (*Feministák Egyesülete*), established in 1904 and since then a member of International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), advocated for women's suffrage in the lower chamber of the Hungarian parliament. Already in March 1908, representatives of the Feminist Association had proposed changes in the electoral law to the

¹² Kodajová D., "Stowarzyszenie Kobiet Słowackich *Živena*", in Janiak-Jasińska A., Sierakowska K., and Szwarz A. (eds.), *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki... Samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich do 1918 roku (na tle porównawczym)* (Warszawa: 2008); Šalíngová A., "Združovanie a spolkový život žien na Slovensku (od polovice 19. do polovice 20. storočia)", *ASPEKT* 1 (2003) 51–62.

¹³ Cviková J., "Terézia Vansová", in De Haan F., Daskalova K., and Loutfi A. (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries* (Budapest and New York: 2006).

¹⁴ Hollý K., "Genéza Dennice, prvého ženského časopisu na Slovensku", *ASPEKT* 1 (2003) 62–71.

¹⁵ Farkašová E., "Hana Gregorová", in De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*.

¹⁶ Lajčiak J., *Slovensko a kultúra* (Bratislava: 2007) 102.

¹⁷ Musilová D., *Z ženského pohľadu: Poslankyně a senátorky Národního shromáždění Československé republiky 1918–1939* (Hradec Králové: 2008) 30–31.

upper chamber of the Hungarian parliament.¹⁸ The Association had several branches in Slovakian towns.¹⁹ Third, the IWSA co-organized with the Feminist Association a congress on female suffrage in Budapest in June 1913, close to Slovak towns.²⁰ From what we know, no Slovak women participated in the congress, yet news on the event proliferated in the Slovak press.

From its entrance onto the Hungarian political scene in 1901, the Slovak National Party fought for universal, equal, and secret suffrage, and so did the factions and parties that either developed from it (Slovak People's Party, agrarian movement) or from its Hungarian umbrella organization (Slovak Social Democracy). Universal suffrage meant the extension of suffrage first and foremost to those who declared their other-than-Hungarian ethnicity, regardless of tax, education, literacy, etc., but not of sex. Slovak politicians wanted to ensure Slovak representation in the Hungarian assembly proportional to the Slovak nationals living in Hungary. Widening suffrage, therefore, was aimed at democratization and representation of different social groups and classes. Women's suffrage was not a primary goal.

Female suffrage did, however, make it into the agenda of rival political streams—social democrats and the workers' movement on the one hand, the Slovak National Party on the other. In *Robotnícke noviny* (Labour Gazette),²¹ calls for female suffrage based on the idea of human equality confronted the opinion that women threatened male workers' subsistence.²² Slovak social democrats argued that the struggle for female suffrage and women's emancipation derived from women's real needs, not

¹⁸ Zimmermann, *Die Bessere Hälfte?* 324.

¹⁹ Dudeková G., "Radikálky alebo konzervatívky? Nové výskumy v oblasti dejín ženského hnutia na Slovensku", in Cviková J., Juráňová J., and Kobová L. (eds.), *História žien: Aspekty písania a čítania* (Bratislava: 2006) 89.

²⁰ Rupp L., *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: 1997) 22–23; Dudeková G., "Międzynarodowa działalność kobiet w Austro-Węgrzech i VII. Kongres Międzynarodowego stowarzyszenia na rzecz praw wyborczych kobiet w Budapeszcie w 1913 r.", in Janiak-Jasińska, Sierakowska, and Szwarz, *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki*.

²¹ The first social-democratic monthly in the Slovak language, it was initially published in 1904 under the title *Slovenské robotnícke noviny* (Slovak Labor Gazette). It stimulated workers' political organizing and served educational purposes in rural areas. Thanks to support from Czech Social Democrats, the monthly became a weekly (*Robotnícke noviny*) in 1909 and helped the Slovak social democrats gain gradual independence from the Budapest party headquarters. (Podrimavský, "Vyvrcholenie politickej krízy" 162–165; Dudeková, "Radikálky alebo konzervatívky?" 89).

²² "Kapitola ženám", *Robotnícke noviny*, April 27, 1913.

just from the desires of bourgeois women.²³ Interestingly, though, the political program of the social democratic party in 1914 did not explicitly include female suffrage.²⁴ In its 1913 program, the Slovak National Party advocated for 'universal, equal, secret, direct suffrage for every irreproachable citizen over 20 years, both male and female, in elections at all levels'.²⁵ It admitted women as members, although only ten women joined and their party activity remained restricted.²⁶ The clerical Slovak People's Party did not approach female suffrage openly, but its MP in the Hungarian assembly, Ferdiš Juriga, advocated female suffrage in parliament in 1915²⁷ and in 1918.²⁸

World War I silenced public discussions on female suffrage. Yet it also saw women take over many traditionally male responsibilities, which, as with their involvement in the labor market, transgressed the traditional public/private gender division. 'The war moved the woman's question far ahead. Women started to live and work, while being responsible for themselves. In those awful days, who could prevent them from grasping men's employment?...It was a social and economic necessity'.²⁹ This raised hopes that, after the war, women would face no obstacles to their active public participation.

In September 1918, the Slovak National Council, a representative body for the Slovak nation, was established. On October 30, 1918, in Turčiansky Sv. Martin, the council adopted the *Declaration of the Slovak Nation*, which expressed Slovaks' political will to create a new state together with the Czechs on the basis of nations' right to self-determination. In a letter to the Slovak National Council, writer and women's activist L'udmila Podjavorinská asked for women to be included in the legislative body.³⁰ In an open letter, Podjavorinská also encouraged women to prepare

²³ "O medzinárodnom sjazde za volebné právo žien a o sociálnej demokracii", *Robotnícke noviny*, June 26, 1913.

²⁴ "IV. sjazd slovenskej sociálnej demokracie", *Prúdy: Revue mladého Slovenska* 5, 6 (1914).

²⁵ "Program Slovenskej národnej strany", *Prúdy: Revue mladého Slovenska* 10, 4 (1913).

²⁶ Podrimavský M., "Organizácia Slovenskej národnej strany v rokoch 1900–1914", *Historické štúdie* 22 (1977) 201.

²⁷ Dudeková G., "Emancipácia a ženské hnutie v Uhorsku: Možnosti a výsledky nových výskumov", *Človek a spoločnosť* 9, 4 (2006) unpaginated, www.saske.sk/cas/4-2006/Dudekova.html.

²⁸ Potemra M., "Boj za všeobecné volebné právo v Uhorsku v politike slovenskej buržoázie v rokoch 1910–1918", *Historické štúdie* 22 (1977) 170.

²⁹ Gregorová H., *Slovenka pri krbe a knihe* (Prague: 1929) 230.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 232–33.

themselves for public life and to choose women representatives for the new local councils.³¹ Yet her calls were ignored.³²

The Slovak National Council was abolished in January 1919. On November 14, 1918, the Revolutionary National Assembly had been established to lay the institutional and legal foundations of the new state. Slovaks were represented in the assembly by 54 parliamentarians (chosen by the only Slovak in the government) out of a total 270 members—and they formed the Slovak MP's club. Among them was a woman, Alice Masaryková, a social worker, feminist, and daughter of Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Ten women were members of the Revolutionary National Assembly (nine of them at the same time).³³

Constitutional Act 121/1920³⁴ established universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage. Both men and women could vote and be eligible, subject to age limits: anyone over 21 could vote for the assembly and anyone over 26 for the senate. Members of the assembly had to be over 30 years of age, while senators had to be over 45. Voting was made a citizen duty.³⁵ Compulsory voting was expected to ensure the proportional representation of all public opinion currents in politics.³⁶

Act 75/1919 on 'Electoral rules for the settlements in Czechoslovakia' was adopted in January 1919 (and amended by Act 261/1919), but was not put into practice in Slovakia, which was under martial law. The first local election in Czechoslovakia took place on June 15, 1919, in the Czech part of the country only. Women and most men in Slovakia voted for the first time in the elections to the National Assembly on April 18 and 25, 1920.

Nationalism, Female Suffrage, or Both?

Arguments for and against female suffrage developed in two discursive contexts in the Slovak public sphere. Either they unfolded from the broader discourse on women's emancipation,³⁷ or they surfaced and

³¹ Ibid., 234.

³² Ibid., 232–234.

³³ Šuchová X., "Politický systém: Prilohy II", in Zemko M. and Bystrický V. (eds.), *Slovensko v Československu (1918–1938)* (Bratislava: 2004) 555.

³⁴ Sivák F., "Volebné právo a prvé parlamentné vol'by v Československu po roku 1918", *Acta Facultatis Iuridicae Universitatis Comenianae Bratislava XV* (1993) 127.

³⁵ Ibid. Malý, *Dějiny českého a česko-slovenského* 282–83.

³⁶ Sivák, "Volebné právo a prvé parlamentné" 128.

³⁷ Bock G., "Women in European History", in Le Goff J. (ed.), *The Making of Europe* (Oxford and Malden: 2002) 137.

disappeared in response to the political initiatives in the area of *Realpolitik* of pre-1918 Hungary and post-1918 Czechoslovakia.

In 1913 and 1914, an ideological clash between intellectuals and women's movement activists Hana Gregorová and L'udmila Podjavorinská sprang up openly in print. In a short lecture, Podjavorinská argued against female suffrage. The struggle for female suffrage, she claimed, would be too partisan, indeed could be detrimental, to what needed to be done at that particular time in history. The British-style suffragist was a kind of 'new woman' to be dreaded. She warned: '[E]ven if women will achieve what they aim for, suffrage will always be granted to us in relation to our males'.³⁸ She did not see relinquishing female suffrage as a sacrifice for the national cause—men's and women's contributions to the nation simply belonged to different spheres. Women were invited to make use of domesticity, from which their sources of recognition came. Podjavorinská stated: 'Woman's question is man's question as well. And together they make the nation's question'.³⁹ The nation rested upon a gendered and dichotomous separation of the private and public spheres; only through complementary but separate genders and spheres could a national community be created.

Podjavorinská believed in women's superior morality characterized by shame, faithfulness, and moderation. In 'Our Rights',⁴⁰ published one year later and after the IWSA congress in Budapest, she no longer saw the public and private spheres as impenetrably separate, but defended women's integration into the public sphere and acknowledged the need for female suffrage. By the same token, the discourse of rights was expanded into the private sphere, where women's 'duties' vis-à-vis the nation came now to be regarded as 'rights'. But Podjavorinská still defended domestic values and feared the decline of family that may come with 'unreasonable emancipation'. She therefore proposed a 'reasonable emancipation' that would not bring confrontation between women and men, but would place women as helpers on men's side.

The more radical Hana Gregorová sketched an ideal of woman in paid work and enjoying political rights.⁴¹ In a liberal vein, she defended women's right to individual self-development, including public participation

³⁸ Podjavorinská L., "Drobnosti o ženách", *Národné noviny* (March 22, 1913) 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰ Podjavorinská L., "Naše práva", *Dennica XVI*, 3 (1914).

⁴¹ Gregorová H., "K ženskej otázke na Slovensku: čítané na zábavno-poučnom večierku v Turč. Sv. Martine dňa 12. apríla 1913", *Prúdy: Revue mladého Slovenska IV*, 7 (1913).

and advancement in social status.⁴² The clash between these two intellectuals stemmed from their positions on who could stand as a political subject. According to Podjavorinská, only after building their own state with Czechs could Slovak women and men afford to deal with the woman question. In contrast, Gregorová contended that women should become political subjects without subordinating their public participation to other goals. Inspired by John Stuart Mill, she stated that the ‘individual uplifting of oneself encompasses the struggle for uplifting human being as such’. For Gregorová, the more educated and emancipated a woman was, the more helpful she was to her environment in social and cultural matters,⁴³ but the nation was not the exclusive addressee of woman’s public involvement.

Prevailing in those days, however, was the image of the ‘proper’ Slovak woman as defined by nationalism, which excluded the ‘unruly’ who interfered with male areas of agency. In this nationalistic spirit, Slovak feminism primarily had women gain suffrage and then stand either by the worker’s side or by the side of the nationally defined political subject, the Slovak man. Women were not political subjects on their own merits in most feminist articulations. Feminism in pre-1918 Slovakia can therefore appear conservative. Nevertheless, recent research refers to women activists’ tactics and strategies, not as ideologically conservative, but as politically pragmatic under the circumstances.⁴⁴

Female suffrage was also defended from the stance of women’s contribution to the articulation of the Slovak nation. They elaborated on women’s involvement in the temperance movement. The image of man drunken in his ‘brain and heart’, whose sober wife was capable of ‘understanding the program of the Slovak National Party’, was used to advocate convincingly for female suffrage.⁴⁵ *Robotnícke noviny* (Labour Gazette) also pointed to male voters who were often bribed by Hungarian candidates with alcohol and food.⁴⁶ Various articles⁴⁷ discussed the changes women could bring to politics, including a focus on social issues, such as education, poverty, hygiene, and healthcare, as well as on culture, morality, or anti-war issues. The writer Elena Ivanková advocated female

⁴² Gregorová, *Slovenka pri krbe a knihe* 242.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁴ Dudeková, “Emancipácia a ženské hnutie v Uhorsku”.

⁴⁵ “Žena a politické právo”, *Národný hlásnik* XLVI, 25 (1913).

⁴⁶ “Ženská emancipácia”, *Robotnícke noviny* X, 26 (1913) 1.

⁴⁷ “Žena a politické právo” 1; N. [Ivanková E.], “Prečo by ženy mali mať volebné právo?”, *Národné noviny* (June 11, 1918) 1.

suffrage by drawing on women's past political involvement in support of Slovak electoral candidates.⁴⁸ Yet although women widely took credit for their political activism, it did not always result in support for female suffrage.

Different arguments surfaced in electoral battles after the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Unlike Czech MPs, who seemed to embrace female suffrage more easily, Slovak MPs feared the impact of the religious and uneducated population in Slovakia, women especially. Slovak politicians questioned universal suffrage and the electoral system—not in the National Assembly, but in separate Slovak MP and district chiefs meetings. Politicians of liberal and agrarian orientation in particular feared that universal suffrage and proportional voting would be 'a leap in the dark' (*Sprung ins Dunklen*), since the electorate was uneducated and unenlightened for 'democratic comforts'⁴⁹—an argument that was first applied to male worker's suffrage. In a meeting of Slovak MPs and district chiefs in autumn 1919, Ján Slávik, then representative of the *Národná Republikánska Rol'nícka Strana* (The Republican Party of Agricultural and Small Farming People),⁵⁰ challenged female suffrage, but his proposal to prohibit women's vote in the first elections was rejected due to the intervention of social democrat Ivan Dérer. Another agrarian MP recalls that in 1920, in the town of Turčiansky Svätý Martin, 'we [Slovak MPs] discussed women's suffrage and constitution all night. Progressive MP's—non-socialists, non-clericals—warned against the first paragraph of the electoral law. However...Social Democrats and the People's Party outvoted us.'⁵¹

Eventually the Slovak MP's club in the National Assembly, in which common Slovak interests outweighed party interests, voted unanimously for the Constitutional Bill (Act 121/1920) and the Electoral Rule for the National Assembly (Act 123/1920), including female suffrage. In his speech preceding the vote, social democrat Ivan Markovič, representative of the Slovak MP's club, said the new electoral law was 'a giant leap' for Slovaks

⁴⁸ Sivák, "Volebné právo a prvé parlamentné" 132.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ This party evolved from the agrarian movement and became the Slovak branch of the Czech Agrarian Party. Not very successful in the parliamentary elections in Slovakia, it was influential in state administration and in managing state support for farmers (Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí* 247).

⁵¹ Štefánek A., "Poslanecká Sněmovna – Stenoprotokoly. 76. Schůze. Pátek 29. Dubna 1927", in *Digitální knihovna – NS RČS 1925–1929*, www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/win/www/eknih/1925ns/ps/stenprot/076.html.

inexperienced in political rights. He expressed hopes 'in people's natural sense for properly understood and true freedom'.⁵²

The Building of Women's Citizenship

The legal status of women at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was not codified in a single code, such as the civil code in force in Austria, but regulated in several Hungarian matrimonial and family laws. The slow pace of Hungarian legal reforms allowed for limited civil rights and freedoms, but as remnants of aristocratic privileges these entailed advantages for women's status, protecting them from poverty and economic deterioration after their husband's death.⁵³ Married women could dispose of the property they brought to the common household as well as of their private property. In non-aristocratic families, widows were entitled to half their husband's property. Act 23/1874 improved the status of unmarried women: after the age of 24, they were released from their father's guardianship and remained legally independent until marriage. Act 31/1894 regulated civil marriage and permitted permanent separation.⁵⁴

In the second half of the 19th century, the nationalist movement and the women in it focused mostly on girls' and women's education. Institutional education in the Slovak language for girls over 12 years of age was missing entirely. But the first women's association Živena's projects to establish women's educational institutes and 'professional' high schools did not prove successful.

Many women improved their organizing skills in philanthropic and charity associations. These were dominated by Hungarian- and German-speaking township populations.⁵⁵ Also women organized at the side of the Slovak nationalist movement focused on townswomen and only discursively strived to include women workers and peasants.⁵⁶

⁵² "Těsнопisecká zpráva o 125. schůzi Národního shromáždění československého v Praze v pátek dne 27. února 1920" (1920).

⁵³ Dudeková G., "Právne postavenie ženy v 19. storočí. Hranice a limity", in Darulová J. and Košťalová K. (eds.), *Sféry ženy: Sociológia, etnológia, história* (Banská Bystrica and Praha: 2003) 380.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Mannová E., "Verejnosť versus rodinný krb?: Ženy v spolkoch na Slovensku v 19. storočí", *Človek a spoločnosť* 9, 4 (2006) unpaginated, www.saske.sk/cas/4-2006/Mannova.html.

⁵⁶ Dudeková, "Emancipácia a ženské hnutie v Uhorsku".

Women's legal status changed significantly with the Constitution of Czechoslovakia of 1920, which read: 'Privileges based on sex, ancestry and employment are not recognized' (Chapter 5 § 106). Czechoslovak law fed on two historical legal sources: Austrian law in Czech lands, and Moravia and Hungarian law in Slovakia. Laws in Slovakia granted women wider rights than the law in force in the other part of the country, mostly in the area of family and patrimonial law. Significant differences concerned the husband's role as legal representative of the wife (which was not the case in Slovakia) and the possibility of separate (in Slovakia) or common (in Bohemia and Moravia) acquisition of property in marriage.⁵⁷ Abortion and homosexuality were illegal in Czechoslovakia, but in Slovakia women's homosexuality was not to be persecuted at all.⁵⁸

Women's status deteriorated again in 1939 under the fascist Slovak Republic. In order to create job opportunities for men, married women were expected to leave their employment and 'to manage and sustain the governance in family, which was their proper place'.⁵⁹ Symbolic sanctity of marriage and family meant further worsening of women's reproductive rights. The promotion of racial and anti-civic principles struck Jewish women most heavily.⁶⁰

The economic and social rights of women living in Slovakia were limited by the implementation of the male-breadwinner model for a long time. For example, in interwar Czechoslovakia, the husband was obliged to support his wife—a provision that hindered women's legitimate presence in the labor market. After World War II, men were still the recipients of tax relief and family welfare.

For the post-World-War-II Czechoslovak state, in which from 1948 on the Communist Party was the hegemonic ruling force, the commitment to women's equality was part of the country's path to socialism and communism. Women's exercise of the right to work, however, was undercut by the double burden of working both for wage and in household and care-giving.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Telecká Z., "Význačné odchýlky v právnom postavení slovenskej ženy", in Göllnerová A. and Zikmundová J. (eds.), *Žena novej doby: Kniha pre národnú výchovu ženy* (Bratislava: 1939) 122.

⁵⁸ Mikulová M., "Právne postavenie ženy za Prvej republiky", in Göllnerová and Zikmundová, *Žena novej doby* 116.

⁵⁹ Zavacká K., "Vládarstvo v rodine": Politika Slovenského štátu voči ženám", in Cviková, Juráňová, and Kobová, *Histórie žien* 308.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Farkašová E. and Kiczková Z., "The Emancipation of Women: A Concept that Failed", in Funk N. and Mueller M. (eds.), *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (London and New York: 1993).

Female Suffrage and Citizenship Today

In the first national election in 1920, women outnumbered men as voters—probably a side effect of World War I.⁶² Eighteen women were elected, the highest number of women in the National Assembly until its dissolution in 1939. From among 60 seats for Slovakia, one was assigned to a woman, Anna Sychravová, a social democrat and Czech teacher living in Slovakia. The only Slovak woman who served in the assembly until its dissolution in 1939 was Gizela Kolláriková, a communist MP elected in the second election period (1925–1929) and later editor of the journal *Proletárka* (Proletarian Woman).⁶³

There were no women MPs in the Slovak assembly, the legislative body of the fascist Slovak Republic (1939–1945). Candidate lists in elections were theoretically based on an estate principle, but elections never took place; the president appointed MPs.⁶⁴

The percentage of women in the National Assembly in Czechoslovakia after World War II and until the communist takeover in February 1948 ranged between 6% and 9%. The communist rhetoric put women's emancipation at the forefront. There was a 30% quota for women in the National Assembly, although women often helped to fulfil other quotas in terms of age, education, and social standing.⁶⁵

After the fall of communism, the proportion of women in the National Assembly dropped significantly (9.6% in the 1990–1992 federal assembly).⁶⁶ Since the inception of the Slovak Republic in 1993, the proportion of women MPs in one-chamber parliament has ranged between 12% and 14%.⁶⁷ The number of women on party lists has grown steadily, but stagnated in the last parliamentary election—women made up 15% of all candidates in the 1994 elections, 16.9% in 1998, 23.1% in 2002, and 22.7% both in 2006 and 2010. A few parties in the post-1989 period adopted quotas or

⁶² Sivák, "Volebné právo a prvé parlamentné" 135.

⁶³ A communist women's weekly published from 1922 to 1927, *Proletárka's* editor-in-chief was the important women's and communist activist and journalist Barbora Rezlerová-Švarcová (Juráňová J., "Barbora Rezlerová-Švarcová", in De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*).

⁶⁴ Zavacká, "Vládarstvo v rodine" 308.

⁶⁵ Filadelfiová J., "O ženách, moci a politike: Úvahy, fakty, súvislosti", in Cviková J. and Juráňová J. (eds.), *Hlasy žien: Aspekty ženskej politiky* (Bratislava: 2002).

⁶⁶ Havelková H., "Politická reprezentace žen v České republice", in Cviková and Juráňová, *Hlasy žien*.

⁶⁷ Filadelfiová J., "Ženy v rozhodovacích procesoch: Situácia na Slovensku", in *Na ceste do Európskej únie: Sprievodkyňa nielen pre ženy* (Bratislava: 2002) www.aspekt.sk/download/EUcelok.doc.

zipper lists at least partly. Political parties, however, do not like gender quotas. Although some introduced more women onto their ballots or made them campaign leaders in the 2006 and 2010 elections, women served mostly as signifiers of change—that is, to distract voters from previous political failures.⁶⁸

The legal basis of women's status in today's Slovakia rests on several documents, most importantly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1982), the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (2001), and the Antidiscrimination Act (2004). The implementation of the sound legal framework of women's citizenship is, however, dissatisfactory. The 25% gender pay gap, discriminatory provisions of pension reform (2002), limited effectiveness of the reconciliation of working and family life policies, repeated politicking of women's sexual and reproductive rights, and political unwillingness to promote women's rights and to support feminist organization—all these things make the lives of girls and women in Slovakia a constant challenge.⁶⁹

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⁶⁸ Kobová L., “Ako ne/dostať ženy do parlamentu: Zostavovanie kandidátnych listín”, in Kobová L. and Maďarová Z. (eds.), *Kradmá ruka feministky rozvažuje za plentou: Aspekty parlamentných volieb* (Bratislava: 2007).

⁶⁹ See “Shadow Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the Slovak Republic : 41st Session” (Bratislava: 2008).

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The Struggle for Female Suffrage in Europe

Voting to Become Citizens

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Whilst scholarship on women's suffrage usually focuses on a few emblematic countries, *The Struggle for Female Suffrage in Europe* casts a comparative look at the articulation of women's suffrage rights in the countries that now make up the political-unity-in-the-making we call the European Union. The book uncovers the dynamics that were at play in the recognition of male and female suffrage rights and in the definition of male and female citizenship in modern Europe. It allows readers to identify differences and commonalities in the histories of women's disenfranchisement and sheds light on the role suffrage has played in the construction of female citizenship in European countries. It provides the background against which a new European paradigm of parity democracy is gradually asserting itself.

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